D.H. LAWRENCE AND SOME FRIENDS

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D.H. LAWRENCE AND SOME FRIENDS

The main facts of Lawrence's life from a childhood of poverty in a Midlands colliery town to controversial greatness in the world of literature are well known. Nevertheless a chronology of his movements may prove of some interest. Always on the move, Lawrence was at the same time always writing, and was directly influenced by a sense of place. While only a few of his books are genuine travel books - Twilight in Italy, The Sea and Sardinia, Morning in Mexico, Etruscan places - many of his novels such as Aaron's rod and Kangaroo have been called lyrical travelogues. There is probably no literary figure who responded so immediately to his geographical environment. Often, place usurps a central role in his books and it may even become a character, disposing of human destinies in accordance with the humans' response to it.

His three greatest books, Sons and lovers, The Rainbow and Women in love (four, if one includes Lady Chatterley's lover) have mainly English settings but were written from the Continent where, rather like James Joyce, he needed to live in order to write detailed descriptions of his home terrain. Frieda Lawrence has described him sitting under a tree at the Villa Mirenda near Florence looking at the flowers around him, but writing of England, two years before his death. England, even when he reviled it as he did in St. Mawr, remained the core of his intellectual and emotional life.

The brief chronology which follows shows Lawrence in perpetual motion. He was continually searching for a place where he might start his ideal community, Rananim, where creative people might live, free from the pres-

sures of society. He moved many times because of his health, in attempts to heal his lungs. But chiefly he moved because he was an Odysseus figure "forever roaming with a hungry heart". "Perhaps it is necessary for me to try these places, perhaps it is my destiny to know the world. It only excites the outside of me. The inside it leaves more desolate and stoic than ever." Thus no matter how beautifully and warmly he described Italy, Mexico and New Mexico, and used them in his writings, inevitably the circle began to close as he felt his life slipping away. The last two novels, The virgin and the gypsy and Lady Chatterley's lover, take us back to England, where, Odysseus-like, his spirit had returned.

At the very end he wrote the fable of the resurrection, "The man who died". While its setting is very real, a hot Mediterranean country, yet because it is a fable, it is not of this world. It is as if he had taken the world of places he had known into another world.

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The three friends who are represented in the exhibition are selected from the many who crossed Lawrence's path. No attempt has been made to assess their careers except where their lives touched Lawrence's.

Aldous Huxley, by far the greatest of the three, the most versatile man of letters of the age, first met Lawrence during World War I in London. But their close friendship was during the last years of Lawrence's life,

from 1926 to 1930. The Lawrences and the Huxleys were together a great deal in Italy and France. Maria Huxley re-introduced painting into Lawrence's life by bringing him some canvases when he was ill in 1926; and from then on he painted seriously. Huxley tried to capture him as Mark Rampion in Point counter point, with but limited success, according to Lawrence. Huxley edited Lawrence's letters two years after his death, writing a moving and perceptive introduction.

Norman Douglas, best known as the author of South Wind, is included here because of the part he played in Lawrence's life, not always in the role of friend. Having introduced Lawrence to Maurice Magnus in 1919, he was naturally outraged at Lawrence's candid descriptions of himself and Magnus which appeared in Lawrence's introduction to a book by Magnus. This little book, Memoirs of the Foreign Legion by M. M., was published in 1924 after Magnus's death. Douglas burst into print in the same year with D.H. Lawrence and Maurice Magnus, a plea for better manners. Lawrence was nettled into replying in The New Statesman. Unfortunately, some of Douglas's friends never forgot the feud, and as late as 1954, were heaping recriminations upon Richard Aldington for his amusing book of reminiscences of Norman Douglas and Giuseppe (Pino) Orioli, Pinorman.

The publisher, Orioli, serves as a link among most of the authors in the exhibition. A person of boundless good humour, he could manage the temperamental Norman Douglas to whom he was devoted. He was proud of his connection with Douglas, Aldington and Lawrence, and of his elegant publications of their works. He was able to get Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's

lover into print by publishing it privately in Florence.

Richard Aldington, who satirically described Orioli in Pinorman, was the best known editor of Lawrence's works. Himself a distinguished novelist, poet and biographer, he was quick to recognize Lawrence's genius. He wrote appreciatively of him before and after his death. To him was entrusted the editing of the beautiful volume, Last poems published by Orioli in Florence after Lawrence's death. "I think of him, alive and dead, as one of the most brave, splendid and vital influences of my own life and of his time."

Much of the material shown, including the two D.H. Lawrence manuscripts, is from the Douglas Duncan bequest.

CHRONOLOGY OF D.H. LAWRENCE

"One walks away to another place and life begins anew. But it is a midge's life." D.H.L.

1885 Born at Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, son of a collier.

1898 Gets a county scholarship and attends high school in Nottingham for 3 years.

1903 After an illness through which his mother nurses him, begins a teaching career.

1904 Comes first in all England in the King's Scholarship Examination.

1906 Enters Nottingham University College.

1908 Begins to teach at Croydon.

1909 First poems in English Review.

1911 First novel, The white peacock published.

1912 Stops teaching. After meeting Mrs. Frieda Weekley, née von Richthofen, he leaves with her for Germany. Second novel, The trespasser published. Sons and lovers is completed in Italy.

1913 Love poems and Sons and lovers are published in England where Lawrence and Frieda come for 6 weeks. Returns to Italy where he works on "The sisters", later The rainbow and Women in love.

1914 In June returns to England where he marries Frieda. Stays in England for the war years. Publishes in periodicals; and several books including The Prussian officer, his first book of short stories; The rainbow, 1915, publicly declared obscene; Twilight in Italy, his first travel book. He and his wife, suspected of being spies, are forbidden to live in any "prohibited areas".

1919 Leaves England, never to return except for short visits. Meets Maurice Magnus in Florence with Norman Douglas. Settles in Italy with his wife.

1920 Women in love and The lost girl are published. While in Sicily writes many of the poems for Birds, beasts and flowers.

1921 Movements in European history and The sea and Sardinia are published. Moves about Europe restlessly. Finishes Aaron's rod. The Lawrences leave Sicily for Ceylon; thence move to Australia where Lawrence writes Kangaroo. Finally arrive in New Mexico as Mrs. Luhan's guests.

1923 Lawrence and Frieda move to Mexico where he starts The plumed serpent. The couple part temporarily; reunited in England. Books published include Kangaroo, and Birds, beasts and flowers.

1924 The Lawrences return to America where they now own a ranch, the gift of Mrs. Luhan. They visit Mexico. The boy in the bush with an Australian setting is published and Memoirs of the Foreign Legion by M.M. with Lawrence's introduction.

1925 Lawrence is very ill in Mexico after finishing The plumed serpent. St. Mawr is published, and after the Lawrences leave America and move to Italy, The death of a

porcupine (essays) appears in America.

1926 Settled at the Villa Mirenda outside Florence, Lawrence defends himself against an attack from Norman Douglas, begins to write Lady Chatterley's lover, and takes up painting seriously.

1927 Lawrence is mostly in Italy where he works on Lady Chatterley, and on his articles which are to be published in 1932 as Etruscan places. Mornings in Mexico is published.

1928 Lawrence in Switzerland, Italy and and France. Lady Chatterley is privately printed in Florence. In the autumn his Collected poems appear.

1929 Lawrence in France, Italy and Germany, writing some of his finest poetry, later edited by Richard Aldington as Last Poems. Meanwhile though a dying man, Lawrence gets out a "popular" edition of Lady Chatterley with his essay My skirmish with the Jolly Roger as a preface; issues a complete edition of Pansies privately printed, as the published version has been issued "censored"; has his solicitor rescue 13 of his paintings seized by the police after an exhibition of his work in London. The book, The paintings of D.H. Lawrence is suppressed. The Escaped cock and his pamphlet Pornography and obscenity are published.

1930 Nettles, Lawrence's last attack on his censors appears in March, the month that Lawrence dies in Vence, France.

Rachel Gomer